



Lowell's Auto-Oriented Retail Establishments

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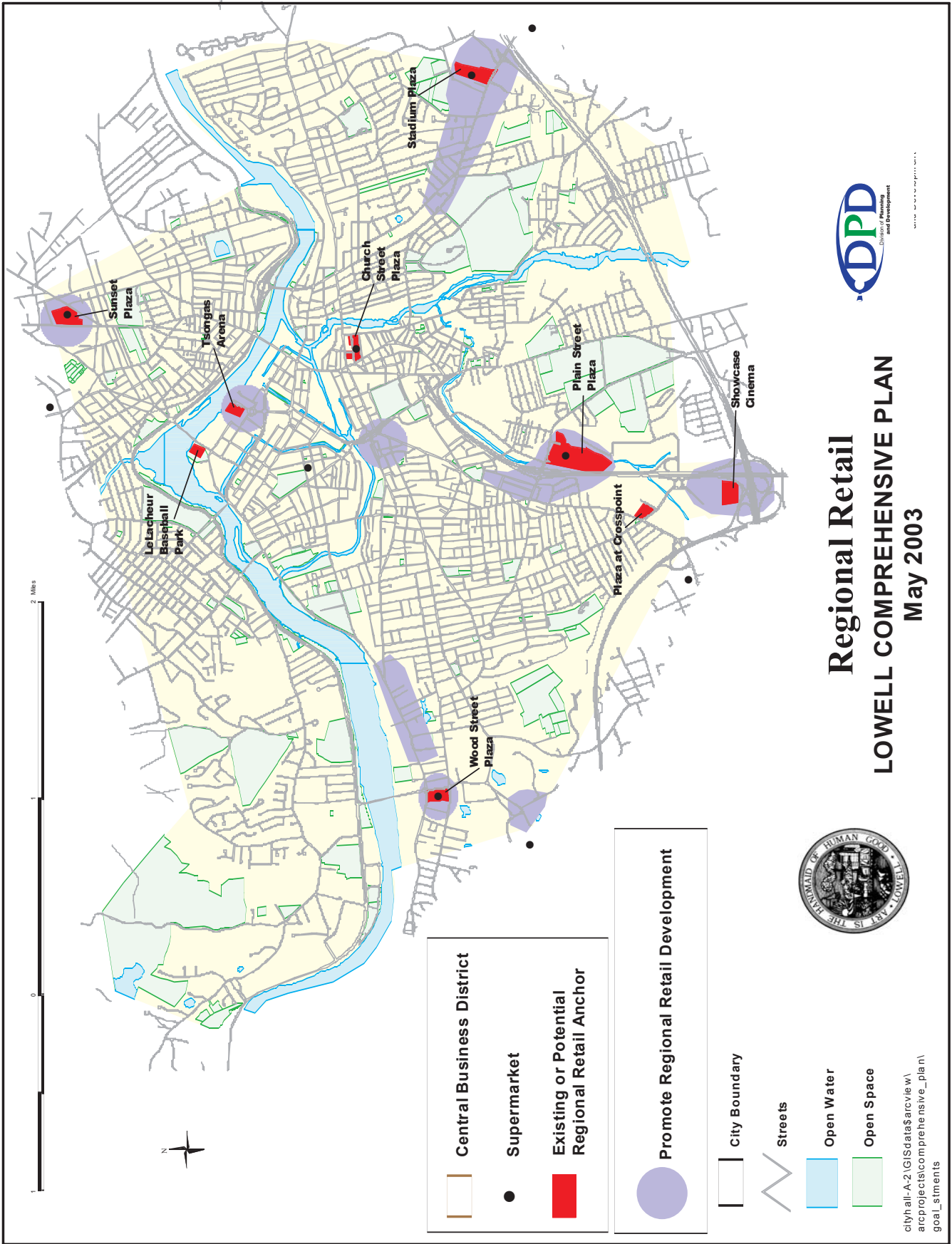
REGIONAL RETAIL

***Goal Statement***

Lowell's suburban retail areas and malls will be commercially vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, and incorporate design standards that complement the fabric and engage the abutting residential neighborhoods.

Over the past several decades, auto-oriented retail corridors, large floor-plate retailers, and strip malls have proven to be commercially successful and appealing to consumers. Lowell residents express a clear preference for shopping in these settings for a variety of reasons. The City should work to retain a greater share of this market within the City limits to enhance convenience for its residents and strengthen the municipal tax base. Lowell will work to protect and promote prime regional retail development areas, where major retail anchors and transportation infrastructure provide desirable settings.

The transportation infrastructure that makes these locations desirable also make them major gateways into the City. Therefore, Lowell must also work to incorporate design standards to help integrate these developments into the urban fabric of adjacent neighborhoods rather than allowing them to detract from the existing character of the community. Successfully enhancing their appearance, integration, and function can improve the marketability and attractiveness of Lowell's prime retail areas to customers and retailers alike.



9.1 Recommendations and Action Steps:

9.1.1 IMPROVE THE PHYSICAL APPEARANCE OF RETAIL CORRIDORS.

Action Step: Incorporate specified design standards, such as uniform signage, landscaping improvements, dumpster screening, and parking lot design, among others.

Action Step: Expand and improve the City's Streetscape/Façade Grant program.

Figure 9-1

Before: A Neglected Commercial Property



Figure 9-2

After: Signage and Façade Improvements



Action Step: Improve the lighting in these commercial corridors, especially in the parking areas.

Action Step: Bury utility lines and consolidate curb openings and driveways within public rights of way.

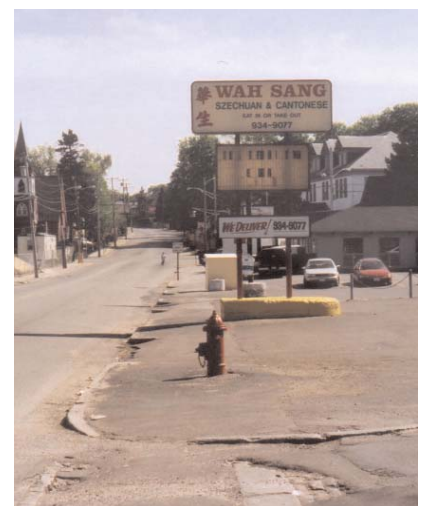
Action Step: Improve the security in the parking areas by increasing the presence of police officers during the evening hours.

Action Step: The Economic Development office should work together with property owners/brokers in an effort to help them improve the physical appearance and site design of Lowell's retail plazas.

Action Step: Leverage existing commercial plazas such as the Church Street Plaza by providing incentives tied to pedestrian access, safety, convenience, and aesthetics.

Figure 9-3

Lacking Clear, Safe and Attractive Pedestrian Walkways



9.1.2 PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS IN HIGHWAY-ORIENTED COMMERCIAL AREAS THAT INCORPORATE MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION AND PEDESTRIAN ACCESS.

Action Step: Protect areas with prime highway access for regional retail development and improve highway connections for other target areas.

Action Step: Create routes of access from neighboring residential areas that are safe and desirable for pedestrians and facilitate the physical separation of pedestrians from vehicular traffic by incorporating landscaping.

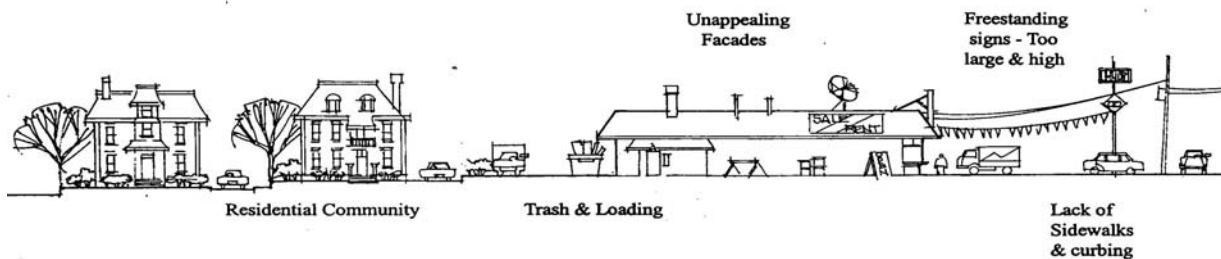


Figure 9-4
Pedestrian-Friendly Walkways

Action Step: Incorporate amenities for pedestrians and public transit users on these commercial nodes, such as pedestrian-controlled traffic lights, signage, bus shelters, weather protection canopies, benches, and bike racks.

Action Step: Encourage the clustering of these retail establishments in nodal areas rather than along linear corridors to facilitate the sharing of parking and increase the viability of access for pedestrians and public transportation users.



Figure 9-5
Retail Strip Mall Improvements:
Porter Square, Cambridge

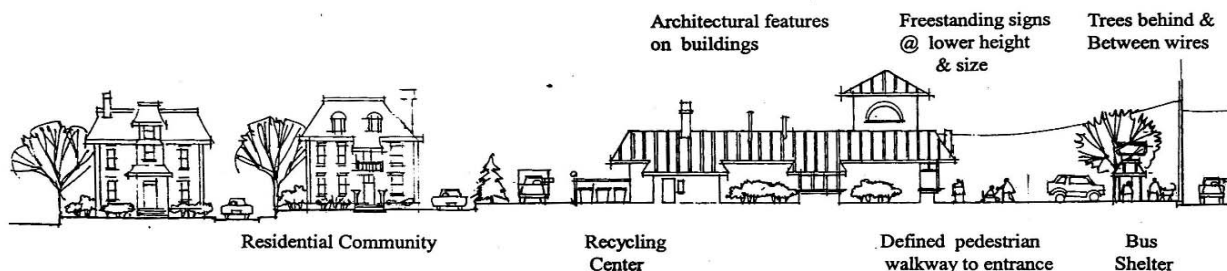


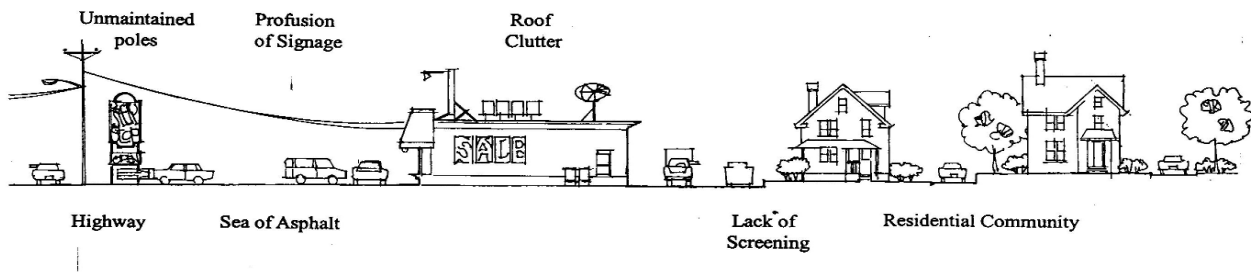
Action Step: Minimize the number and width of curb cuts in regional retail areas to improve traffic and pedestrian safety and reduce conflict points for potential accidents.

Action Step: Encourage the location of regional retail on the ground floors of buildings in office and industrial parks with exterior entrances to the parking to take advantage of their employees as a daytime market and their ample parking to serve evening users from the surrounding area

9.1.3 MARKET THE CITY OF LOWELL TO NATIONAL RETAILERS.

Action Step: The Economic Development Office at the Division of Planning and Development should consult with location and property management representatives for regional and national retailers to identify characteristics that are desirable to large retail chains when determining locations for new stores.





Action Step: The Economic Development office should work together with the property owners/brokers in an effort to recruit desirable national retailers to Lowell's retail plazas and near major retail anchors like the Showcase Cinemas and various supermarkets.

Action Step: The City of Lowell's Economic Development office should partner with owners and brokers (sharing costs) on a large-scale marketing campaign.

Figure 9-6
New Grocery Store in The Acre



Figure 9-7
Showcase Cinemas



Action Step: Identify the retail subsectors where sales leakage are more significant and market the purchasing power of Lowell's demographics where the individual household may have low or moderate income, but the potential sales are higher due to the existence of a large underserved clientele.

9.1.4 LESSEN THE IMPACT OF AUTO-SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER.

Action Step: Reduce the number of areas in the City where auto-service businesses are permitted, but identify more appropriate locations and encourage the clustering of these establishments in those areas.

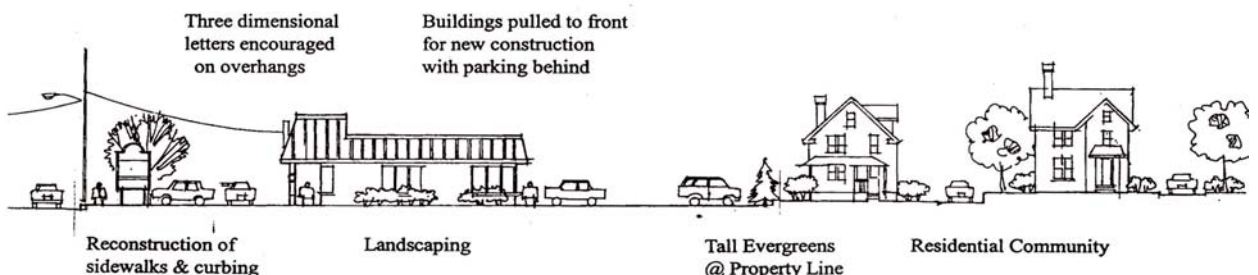


Figure 9-8
Gas Station Landscaping



Action Step: Adopt strict design standards and requirements for these businesses.

Action Step: The Inspectional Services Department should be more aggressive in tracking down illegal uses such as auto-body shops in residential neighborhoods, and other inappropriate businesses that are not registered with the City.

9.1.5 PROTECT PRIME DEVELOPMENT SITES IN LOWELL'S AUTO-ORIENTED RETAIL AREAS FROM LESS APPROPRIATE LAND USES.

Action Step: Require all new construction in the prime retail nodes to maintain public uses including retail, entertainment, institutional, and public office uses on the ground floor, limiting residential and non-public office uses to the upper floors and nearby areas.

Action Step: Promote neighborhood main street districts to encourage the location of convenience stores and other local neighborhood businesses in those areas, reserving the auto-oriented corridors for commercial uses serving a more regional clientele.

Figure 9-9
New Mixed Use Development in Arlington, VA

